



Fact Sheet

South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control • www.scdhec.gov

Impetigo

What Is <i>Impetigo</i>?	Impetigo is a highly contagious bacterial skin infection, most often caused by a Group A Strep bacteria. It can appear anywhere on the body, but usually attacks exposed areas. Group A Streptococcal (GAS) bacteria cause common infections such as strep throat and impetigo. At any time up to 10% of school children may carry the bacteria and have no symptoms. The CDC estimates that there are several million cases of strep throat and impetigo, and about 10 thousand invasive GAS cases. Most Group A Streptococcal infections are not serious or invasive and are not reportable to the SC Department of Health & Environmental Control.
What are the symptoms?	A small patch of blisters appear. After a few hours the blisters break into a red, moist area that oozes or weeps fluid.. Children tend to get it on the face, especially around the nose and mouth, and sometimes on the arms or legs. After a few days, the blisters form a golden or dark-yellow crust resembling grains of brown sugar.
How is <i>Impetigo</i> treated?	Key to treating impetigo is good personal hygiene. Regular washing with soap and water can clear up mild forms. If the sores don't clear up in 48 hours, or if the infected person is a small child, see your doctor. The doctor may prescribe antibacterial baths or a topical ointment, available only by prescription. Anyone who develops impetigo should use a clean towel with each washing. Be sure to launder those towels separately.
How do people catch this disease?	Most people get this contagious disease through physical contact with someone who has it, or from sharing the same clothes, bedding, towels, or other objects. Because of a lot of physical contact and large-group activities occur among children, they are the primary victims and carriers of impetigo.
What can be done to stop the spread of this disease?	Careful and regular handwashing is the best prevention, especially before eating, after coughing or sneezing or using the bathroom, and before preparing foods. Cuts and abrasions should be kept clean and covered. Anyone who has been diagnosed with non-invasive group A strep should stay home from work or school until they have been on antibiotics for at least 24 hours. Avoid close personal contact with anyone who has strep throat, wound infection or impetigo or GAS infection until 1-2 days after antibiotics are begun. . Even if only one family member has impetigo, everyone in the household should be extra careful, washing hands and face often with soap and water and drying with clean towels.

SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL

Region 7

Serving Berkeley, Charleston and Dorchester Counties

Public Health Office • 4050 Bridge View Drive • Suite 600 • N.Charleston, SC 29405 • Phone: (843) 746-3800 • www.scdhec.gov